

THE
Newport Mercury
F. A. PRATT & CO.,
AS CORNERS OF
Market and Thames streets.
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1860.
\$2.00 per annum in advance.
Advertisements inserted at one
cent per square (12 lines) for the
first insertion, and seven cents
for each subsequent insertion.
Those who advertise by the year,
make contracts on liberal terms.
The privilege of Annual Adver-
tising is limited to their own busi-
ness, and all advertisements.

Newport Mercury.

ESTABLISHED, JUNE 12, 1758.

Volume 103.

NEWPORT, R. I., SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1860.

Number 5,320.

Poetry.

THE SUNBEAM.

BY ELLEN.

The sunbeam is breaking
Through mists that enshroud,
With silver lines edging
The masses of cloud.

It chases the shadows,
T'ron rock and hillside;
In vales and in hollows
They cower and hide.

It spangles the water,
With gem and with star,
It carpets with glory
The ocean afar.

O'er hayrick and thicket;
O'er blackberry stem;
The golden red cluster;
The century gem.

Rejoicing and gliding,
And drinking the dew,
Then auring the fern leaves,
To let its light through.

Uplighting the tower,
And flushing the stone;
All joy for the sunbeam,
The shadows have gone.

All joy for the sunbeam,
More truly our own,
The smile of affection,
The softening of tone.

A clasp of the fingers,
A word uttered low,
Has power to banish
The cloud from our brow.

The glow from our spirit,
The weight from our heart,
Before its light power
Like shadows depart.

All joy for life's sunbeam,
Affection and love;
This wilderness blessing
With light from above.

Selected Tale.

THE BROWN HOUSE UNDER THE MAPLES.

BY MARY W. STANLEY GIBSON.

There it stood, nestling modestly in the shade, with a smooth green hill on the right hand, and an orchard famous for its 'pumpkin sweeties' all through the country, on the left. The smooth green hill separated it from a school house, also brown, and also standing under maple trees; and in my very young days, I used to fancy that the view from its daisied summit was quite as fair as that which Moses had of the Promised Land. A little, well-worn path, just wide enough for childish feet to thread, led over the hill, and down to Aunt Hannah's door.

For Aunt Hannah lived in the brown house—a lonely old woman, in one sense of the word, and, in another, the happiest old woman you ever saw. Not a drop of her blood flowed in any of our veins—father, mother, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins and nephews and nieces, they had all gone, and left Aunt Hannah on the home farm by herself. But she had plenty of relatives by adoption. Every child who crossed the threshold of the school house, felt sure that 'an' own aunt' lived in the cottage just beyond, and at 'recess,' or noon, her porch and kitchen were full of merry faces, and such a noise! It was enough to deafen any one, but she seemed to like it. There was a well, the like of which was never known in any other place—so deep, so cool, and with such a nice windlass, long enough for four little hands to grasp at once; there were the woodbine shaded front stoops, where we had leave to sit and eat our dinner, and the great stone kitchen, where we dined if it rained; and then there was the garden, where we used to weed the beds, by way of helping the kind old lady; and the great barn, where we sometimes went and jumped upon the hay; in short, Aladdin's palace, never had half so many charms for him as Aunt Hannah and her domicile had for us. And then if all else failed, she could tell such capital stories—and without ever forgetting to put in the best part, too! As some story-tellers I have known in later years are in the habit of doing.

It never entered our heads for a long time to wonder at our friend's early life. No doubt we thought she had always been Aunt Hannah—a tall, and gaunt, and wrinkled, with a good natured face, and a pair of kind, light blue eyes, that never looked so kind as when it was around her. But one day, (so long it is that I seem to be looking back a hundred years, and yet I can scent the dead beach leaves in the sunny air, and hear the little brook fall as plainly as I heard it then,) five of us school children were spending our Saturday afternoon in the grove behind the school house, looking for the last autumn flowers, and trying to make a water wheel and trip-hammer for the brook, like one the boys had put up in their own play ground the week before. There was Jennie Barrett—who was my sworn friend and ally, and Julie Barrett—but she has another name and two fair faced sisters, Carrie and Lucy—and the angels in Heaven know what to call them to-day, far better than I, here upon the earth they left so early; and we all were discussing a wedding that had recently taken place in the village, as we chipped away at the water-wheel.

'And the bride wore a great, long veil, that came almost to her feet,' said Jennie; 'and I saw the bridegroom cry. I wonder what he cried for.'

'People always do when they get married,' said Julie. 'I suppose it is the fashion.'

'Well, I wouldn't, I know,' said Carrie, stoutly. 'It must be very nice to wear a long white veil, and have every one say how pretty you look. Dear me, I wish I was old enough to get married.'

'To Wallace Knight?' said Lucy, archly; 'and then we all burst out laughing, Carrie loudest of all. We little thought that she was to go so soon to the land where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, and where the white veil of innocence is the garment we most need.'

Jennie listened silently as we talked about the weddings that were on the carpet in the village, and those which had already taken place within our recollection. At last she laid down her knife, and gazing down at the blue curl of smoke escaping from the cottage chimney, exclaimed:

'Well, there!'

'What is it?' we all asked.

'I wonder if Aunt Hannah has ever been married!'

There was a solemn pause—the idea was so perfectly new. At last, Lucy, who was the youngest, and the most matter-of-fact of us all, solved the difficulty.

'Of course she hasn't. There isn't any Uncle Hannah, is there?'

'Why, no. But then he might have died you know,' said Jennie.

'Oh! I didn't think of that!'

We eyed the cottage chimney with increasing interest. We had never thought of it before, but, of course, Aunt Hannah

must have been married. She could not be an old maid, like our Sunday School teacher, whom we all hated, and who rapped our fingers with her keys if we could not remember all the texts she gave us to learn; or like our school mistress who came in the morning with her hair done up in curl papers, sticking out like horns over her eyes, and who fussed Carrie so that her hand was blistered the week before, and told me, that she heard three gentlemen laughing on the steps of the E—Hotel because I turned in my toes so when I walked—frightening me so by the audacious lie, that for years I made a circuit of three streets to avoid that house—and those men! No, Aunt Hannah was like neither of these. She was more like the good fairies in our story books.

'Only the good fairies were never married,' persisted Lucy.

'How do you know?' queried Jennie, who settled all disputes among us. 'The story was not obliged to tell about that.'

'But my Aunt Leonora has Uncle Henry's picture hanging up in her bedroom, and I never saw any in Aunt Hannah's.'

'I'm not sure for that. I know she has been married, and I mean to go down and ask her. Who will go with me?'

All of us, of course, though we shrank back a little at first. So we left the water wheel half finished, beside the brook, and went through the woods and over the hills to the little back door. The kitchen was empty, so was the dining room, but we heard the low buzzing of the wheel up stairs, and halting in the passage, we cried out:

'Aunt Hannah—may we come up?'

She came to the head of the stairs, dressed in an old fashioned blue short gown and petticoat, and looked benignantly over her spectacles at us.

'Bless me, children! where did you come from?'

'We've been making water-wheels up in the woods,' said Jennie, 'and we got tired and so we thought we would come and see you a little while.'

Somehow it was much more difficult to ask Aunt Hannah that question when we stood face to face, than it seemed beside the brook.

'Well, I am very glad to see you—very glad, indeed. Who would like to take the little cart and the pails, and go down to the river and fetch up some water for me to wash with next Monday?'

We all spoke at once, for the dragging of the painted yellow cart about, and the splashing we got at the river side, were two of the dearest pleasures of our lives. Aunt Hannah came down and kindled a great fire in the kitchen, and put some apples down to roast before it.

'Sure you haven't got anything on, that water will spoil, because I know you will come home like so many drowned rats—children always do,' she said, peering over her spectacles at our clothes. No—we only had on week day dresses and aprons, to say nothing of stout shoes, and so she went to help us wheel the cart from under the shed and fill it with pails.

'It's a great mercy you come,' she said, for I was just wondering how I should get the water up this week—my boy John has gone home with a sick headache. Now you may fill the pails and play down there just twenty minutes. You'll hear the bell ring when it is time for you to come up, and while you are getting dry, you shall have some roasted apples and gingerbread and cheese, and I will tell you a story—That will pay you for going.'

'Pay us, we would have drawn the water dry if Aunt Hannah had wanted us to do it and she knew it very well.'

The twenty minutes passed quickly while we were pelting each other with pebbles and paddling in the water—the bell rang, and dragging our load up under the shed, we went in and stationed ourselves before the fire, steaming like so many small engines while we discussed our feast.

Jennie had grown frightened and would not ask the question; by a unanimous vote the burden had been laid upon my shoulders.

I took courage and blurted out:

'We want to know—there was a breathless silence and I nearly choked with a mouthful of gingerbread. 'We want to know if you are married!'

'Married! What put that into your head, child?'

'Jennie Barrett,' I said, feeling rather scared.

'No—I am not married,' and she turned to the apples again, with a deep flush on her cheek. Jennie did not see it, and now that the ice was broken, she plunged in boldly enough.

'But were you ever married, Aunt Hannah?'

No.

The monosyllable was not very encouraging, but still Jennie went on.

'We were talking about the wedding, and about old maids, you see, and I told the girls I was sure you wasn't one—'

'But I am, Jennie.'

'Well, I don't care,' shouted Carrie. 'If Aunt Hannah is an old maid, I like 'em, and I'd be one too, there.'

Aunt Hannah laughed.

'You don't know what you are talking about, you silly thing. Finish your apples, and then draw up nearer the fire, for you mustn't get dry all over the thread is dry—I can't have you take cold at my house.'

The meal was soon over and we were ranged around the fire again, facing out into the room this time, that our dresses might get dry all round. Aunt Hannah moved the table back and brought her own great chair in front of us.

'Little girls ought never sit idle. You can unravel these stockings' feet, while I knit and mind you do not break the yarn more than you can help.'

We took the work.

'And now for the story.'

'What shall it be about?'

'About old maids,' said Carrie, in an earnest way that set us all laughing.

Aunt Hannah mused.

'I think I will tell you a story about one and when it is finished you shall all guess who it is.'

She began to knit and we were all still as mice.

'A great many years ago,' said Aunt Hannah, 'sofly, 'There was a young girl living in a farm house, very much like this. She was about fifteen and people said she was very pretty. I suppose she was.'

'How did she look?' asked Carrie.

'She was tall and slender, and she had blue eyes and light brown hair and such a color on her cheeks; did you ever see an old fashioned red rose?'

Yes—we had gathered scores of them.

'Well, her cheeks were almost that color, and her teeth were as white as snow, which was a very good thing, because she was almost always laughing and showing them. This girl had a father living, and a brother who was deformed and could not walk a step without some one at his side to hold him up. Her sisters had married and gone away from home when she was a little child, and her mother was dead.'

So she had all the work of the house to see after and her father and brother to take care of into the bargain.

'I should think she had to work hard enough,' said Jennie.

'Well, I suppose she did; but she was young and strong then and did not mind it. She lived there until she was twenty-two, thinking herself the happiest creature in the world. Then her brother, who had always been so ill, grew worse and a doctor used to come every day from the village to see him. He was dying with a quick consumption they said, but he suffered dreadfully. He never wanted his sister to be out of his sight, so he hired a woman to take her place in the house while she watched him. I should be sorry to tell you how little rest of any kind she got for those three months, or how much it pained her to see him in such agony. She could have borne it much easier than she could watch him hearing it.'

'At last spring came and the doctor said he might live, perhaps, till fall. She went out to the front door to get a breath of fresh air, just after she had heard this, feeling very glad and happy because her brother was not going to be taken away. A little ash-colored bird sat on a tree near the house, singing, not as other birds do, but in a queer kind of a way—one long, sweet note, and then, nothing more for a long time. She listened awhile and then went back into her brother's room.'

'George,' she said, 'just hear that strange bird.'

'He listened and then took her hand in his.

'My dear sister, it is singing for me.'

'What do you mean, George?'

'Did the doctor tell you I was going to get well?'

'Yes.'

'He is mistaken—I can feel it here,' and he laid his sister's hand upon his heart.

'The pain has all gone, but I am dying.'

She would not believe him, she went to the kitchen window and made him some wine whey, and got her father to stay at home from the field that afternoon and cheer him up. It was always the custom to read prayers at 9 o'clock in that house; they had read them for some time in his bedroom. On that night he asked to sit up in his chair, and his sister helped him to dress and wheeled him out into the old kitchen before the fire. After prayers were over she went up to him. He was lying back upon his pillows looking round the room with a smile, for he had not been there for a long time.

'Well, George,' said she, 'the bird has gone.'

'Are you sure?' and he put his hand to his heart as if he had a sudden spasm of pain.

No; there it was at the kitchen window—three sweet notes and all was still.

The girl was frightened at first, but she bent over her brother the next moment and spoke to him. He did not answer. He would never answer again.'

'Was he dead?' Aunt Hannah, we asked.

'Yes.'

'Why, it is like the story of the Banisher,' said Lucy.

'Ah, but this is true said Carrie.

'Yes, it is true, every word of it, my dear children.'

'She lived on the farm with her father, and after George died he seemed to droop more and more. People said he was fretting after him. I do not know how that was for he never mentioned his name after he saw him lowered into the grave. He used to work now and then on the farm and one morning after he had gone from the house, his daughter stood at her chamber window, trying to see if the stage that went up the river road each day, had stopped to leave any letters, when all of a sudden she heard that bird begin to sing again. Her heart stopped beating for a moment.'

'Oh, is it for me, or is it for father? she thought to herself. Not for her; though perhaps if it had not been for leaving the man quite alone, she would have been glad to have it so. He had a kind of sun stroke and never got up again. He did not know her until a few minutes before he died; then he put out his hand and called her by name.'

'I heard the bird that morning,' he said. 'And so did I, father.'

'It sung before your mother died. I am going to her now, and to George. Be a good girl and you will not be long after us.'

'Why, the people all die in this story,' said Carrie, who liked merry tales.

Aunt Hannah wiped her eyes.

'Yes, my dear, they often do in true ones.'

'And when she was left all alone, what did she do?'

'Lived, my child, as we all must do, until God sees fit to let us die.'

'Was she ever happy again?'

'Oh, yes.'

A beautiful blush rose to Aunt Hannah's withered cheek.

'Yes, she was very happy afterwards. She still held the farm, because it had been her father's last wish, but she could not manage it quite alone, and she got one of the neighbors to help her. This neighbor had a son named Arthur, two or three years older than she was, who had been away a long time, ever since he was a little boy, in fact, at an uncle's. He came home that very summer.'

There was a pause. Aunt Hannah seemed intent upon a stitch she had dropped.

'I know what you are going to say now,' said Jennie, eagerly. 'They fell in love with each other.'

'Quite right, Jennie.'

'And got married.'

'No.'

'Oh, why not?'

'You shall hear.' And the stitch being taken up, Aunt Hannah went on—not quite so steadily as before.

'They were in love with each other, as you call it, and a very true and tender love it was, too. He was of age, and owned a pretty little farm in another county; she was of age, too, and her own mistress, and his family were delighted with the match. The wedding was to take place on the 20th of August. On the evening of the 10th they sat together in the front door, looking up at the moon, and talking about the places they were going to visit during the honeymoon. Suddenly a bird began to sing in the stillness—she knew the note, and it made her sick and faint.'

'What is the matter?' he said, bending over her.

'And she told him. How merrily he laughed at the idea. But still the bird kept singing every now and then.'

'When it was time for him to go, she went with him to the wagon, and patted the black horse that drew it. It was Arthur's favorite, and she had often let it eat bread and sugar out of her hand. He came up and kissed her as he took the reins.'

'Sleep well,' he said, 'in spite of that malicious little bird. I will come over early in the morning to let you see that it has done me no harm.'

'By nine o'clock, Arthur?'

'Yes. Good night, my darling.'

'He drove away, and she stood looking after him. She slept soundly all the night, but she was astir early—and at nine all her work was done, and she was waiting in the front door. The clock struck. A few moments after she saw some one coming. It was not Arthur, but his father.'

'Had anything happened?' asked Lucy, with a pitiful look.

'My dear, the black horse was suddenly frightened on his way home—he dashed the wagon to pieces, and threw his master out on a heap of stones. All that August night, while she slept so sweetly, added Aunt Hannah, with a sudden break in her voice, 'he was lying there in the moonlight stone dead.'

'Poor thing,' said Jennie. And little Lucy sobbed.

'And after everybody was dead, Aunt Hannah, did she die too?'

'No, my dear. Perhaps she wanted to—maybe that she prayed to, just at first—but after a while she got over that—'

She saw what God had been trying to teach her all along (and he will try and teach you, too, my pretty one, in a few years), not to set her heart on any earthly thing.

So she thought more of Him than she had done, and tried to love Him, and serve Him better—and I trust she has succeeded.'

'What a sad story—what a sad life,' sighed Jennie.

'My dear, what if I should tell you that after she got to be old and lonely—an old maid, in fact—she was really happier than she had ever been before.'

'Oh, Aunt Hannah, how could that be?'

'God will show you one day, if you will let Him.'

She spoke so solemnly that we were silent a long time. Then we rose to go.

'But you have not guessed who this girl was,' she said.

One thought it must be Sally Hines, the schoolmistress; another that it was Miss Betsey Wingfield, who lived quite by herself; another that it was her own aunt Miss Sarah Wilson. The old lady listened, smiling, but shook her head at every name.

'You never can be Yankees,' she said, 'or you would have found out long ago. If you go down to the little graveyard on the hill, just beyond the schoolhouse, you know—'

'Oh yes.'

'And look at four graves in the corner by the wall, you will see who I mean.'

'Why, they are your graves, Aunt Hannah,' cried Julie.

'My father's, my mother's, my brother's, and—Arthur Wood's,' said Hannah, gravely. 'Yes, children, I was the pretty, blue-eyed girl who lived here once.'

She put down her knitting and went out of the room. We glanced at each other, and then stole noiselessly away; and going into that lonely church-yard on our way back, we looked with a new interest upon the last homes of those whose story we had just been hearing.

It was many years ago, as I said before, and since then the bird has sung again, and there are five graves instead of four. The Brown House under the Maples has passed into other hands, and Aunt Hannah, no longer old and lonely, is with the loved and lost—in Heaven.'

Talk with the Boys.

No. 4.—Carbonic Acid in the Steam Engine—The Difference between High and Low Pressure Engines.

'In the engine which I described to you last week, the steam, after it has done its work, is allowed to escape into the atmosphere. The atmosphere extends up from the earth about 45 miles, and a column of it an inch square, and the whole 45 miles in height, weighs about 15 lbs. As the air is a fluid, flowing freely in all directions, the weight of the column of air presses sideways with the same force that it does directly downward—pressing in fact, near the earth in every direction with the same power of 15 lbs. to the square inch. Consequently, as the piston moves along, driving out before it the waste steam from the cylinder, it has to push this steam against the pressure of the atmosphere. The early inventors of the steam engine understood this matter perfectly, and to get rid of the back pressure of the atmosphere, they kept the education valve closed and condensed the steam by spouting into it a jet of cold water.'

'I do not see how that gets rid of it, sir.'

'A cubic inch of water, converted into steam occupies 1,700 cubic inches of space; consequently, if the steam which fills a cylinder containing 1,700 cubic inches is condensed into water, it will occupy only one cubic inch of room. The steam is not entirely got rid of, but the cylinder is almost emptied.'

'I should think, though, that if it got a little water in it at every stroke it would soon get full of water.'

'It would, unless the water was taken out. Instead of going through with the early history of the contrivances, let me describe to you the present arrangement of the low pressure engine. The main cylinder is placed to stand upon a second cylinder directly below it, called the condenser. Into this condenser is constantly spouting a jet of cold water, filling it with spray. As soon the upward stroke of the piston is completed, a valve is opened by the machinery from the lower part of the engine into the condenser. As the steam flows into this cold vessel it is readily condensed into water, leaving the whole cylinder below the piston entirely empty of either steam, air or anything else. A pipe leads from the upper end of the cylinder into the condenser, and when the downward stroke of the piston is completed, a valve is opened into this pipe from the upper end of the cylinder, allowing the steam which has just pushed the piston down to flow through the pipe into the condenser, where it is quickly turned into water.'

'I should not think it would flow fast enough to get out of the way of the piston.'

'It is surprising to learn how rapidly it does flow. But steam or air passing into a vacuum moves with astonishing rapidity. A cylinder 12 feet long empties itself in the twinkling of an eye. Now, we come to the subject which we have traveled such a roundabout road to reach, namely, the

presence of carbonic acid in the steam engine. This is owing to the relations of carbonic acid to water. Water has the property of absorbing carbonic acid, the particles of the acid distributing themselves among the particles of water and forming a portion of the liquid. Now, when the steam in the cylinder is condensed, the carbonic acid which it contained is not condensed with it, but remains in the gaseous form; the absorption of the gas by the water being a slow process, while the steam is condensed instantaneously. In the high pressure engine, where the waste steam is blown out into the open air, the carbonic acid goes out with it and is not perceived; but in the low pressure engines, where the steam is boxed up tightly and condensed, it is found that the condenser becomes rapidly filled with carbonic acid gas, stopping the engine unless it is removed. Low pressure engines are accordingly supplied with large air-pumps for sucking out the carbonic acid and other gases contained in the water. This part of the machinery is generally in sight on our Sound and North River steamboats. If you go upon one of these boats which has a beam engine, you will see a stout connectin rod attached to the beam, part way between the end and the fulcrum, and at the lower end of this rod a piston working into a cylinder. That is the air-pump.'

'What did you say about other gases?'

'There are other gases besides carbonic acid which are absorbed by water, the principal one being atmospheric air. It is this air in the water that is breathed by fishes. A fish does not procure the oxygen which supports his life by decomposing the water, separating the atom of oxygen from the atom of hydrogen and appropriating the former to his own blood; his gills have not the power of effecting the separation. But he breathes the air which has been absorbed by the water. A fish will die in water which has no air in it, just as quickly as he will on dry land—'

You can easily try this by putting a fish into water that has recently been boiled.'

'While the water is hot?'

'No; as soon as it has had time to cool. Boiling drives the air out of water, but in time it is slowly absorbed again. In the condensing engine the air-pump is used, not only to remove the carbonic acid and other incondensable gases, but also to pump out the water of the condensed steam and the water that has been employed to condense the steam, and which has been warmed by the process, so that it is unfit to use again. All these operations take a good deal of power, and counterbalance, to a considerable extent, the advantage gained by condensing the steam.'

'The advantage! What advantage?'

'If, in the high pressure engine, the piston is always pushed against the pressure of the atmosphere, 15 lbs. to the inch; and if by shutting out the atmosphere and condensing the steam, we get rid of this back pressure, do we not get more available power from the same steam?'

'I should not think that 15 lbs. to the inch would amount to much.'

'Ha! Get your slate and see. I think the cylinder of the engine in the steamer Metropolis is 105 inches in diameter, but you may make the estimate for an engine 100 inches. What would be the area of a circle 100 inches in diameter?'

'7,854 inches.'

'Now, if there was a pressure of 15 lbs. on each of those inches, how many pounds pressure would there be?'

'117,810 lbs.'

'That is equal to the weight of 117 large oxen, weighing 1,000 lbs. a piece. And if the piston makes 24 strokes (counting both ways) in a minute, 12 feet to a stroke, the power lost by working such an engine against the pressure of the atmosphere would be sufficient to lift this large drove of cattle right up perpendicularly 228 feet every minute. So, it is the power lost, but this power is not all saved by introducing the condensing apparatus. In the first place, there is generally a back pressure of about three pounds to the inch pressure of the low pressure engine. The cylinder of the low pressure engine, then the working of the air pump and all the machinery connected with it takes a deal of power. But there is another advantage of low pressure, greater than the saving of power; they are far safer. It is very seldom, indeed, that the boiler of a low pressure engine explodes.'

'Are most of our engines, then, high pressure?'

'Yes; the high pressure engine is so much simpler, that it costs less and requires less skill in the engineer to manage it than the low pressure engine. For this reason, nearly all small engines are made of this class. It is seldom that you

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